David and Mayumi Steinmetz
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Dockets Management Branch (HFA-305)
Food and Drug Administration
5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

To whom it may concern:

We are writing because of concern with Docket #98B-1038, "Irradiation in the production, processing, and handling of food." We have always been concerned with seeking out fresh, organic, healthful food, and even "subscribe" to the season's crops at a local organic farm. Now that we have a small child, we certainly want to be sure she eats only the best quality food.
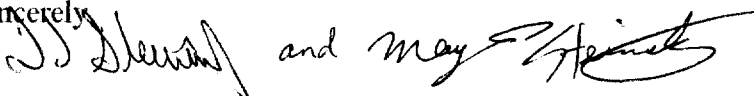
To help us choose such food, we feel that proper labeling is essential. We do look at the ingredients list, and also try to determine the origin of any food. We look for any notices about organic certification. Therefore, we would consider it essential to have irradiated food clearly labeled as such. Such labeling must, we believe, include the terms "irradiation" and "irradiated," and include the radura symbol. Any ambiguous references would be confusing to us, and I'm sure to anyone else who is trying to understand the processes the food has gone through.

Since irradiation destroys the vitamin content of the food, we would want to know about this alteration in the food we may choose to eat. For example, such a loss may mean we need to find ways to make up for the vitamin deficit. Since we like to eat our fruit and vegetables fresh and uncooked as much as possible, any vitamin loss through irradiation would be telling.

Flavor and texture are also concerns for us, since gourmet cooking is a hobby for Mayumi. Apparently irradiation of food can affect these qualities, so we would want to know about that possibility.

Thank you for considering our petition regarding irradiation labeling.

Sincerely,

David and Mayumi Steinmetz

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